

Description

[Composite Outsole]

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0001] Numerous cycling shoes exist on the market for cyclists of all abilities. FIG. 1 shows a conventional cycling shoe 100. Cycling shoe 100 comprises an upper 102 coupled to an outsole 104. Outsole 104 and upper 102 are coupled or lasted using conventional techniques. Upper 102 frequently has a tightening system 106, which is shown as a series of straps 106 or equivalent that extend from outsole 104 and anchor the outsole 104 to the shoe 100. Straps 106 frequently are coupled a fastening system 108. Fastening system 108 is used to tighten the shoe about the foot of a cyclist. Fastening system 108 can be a series of straps having hook and pile (or hook and loop) material, or other closure systems, such as a canopy closure system described in United States Patent Application Serial Number 10/631,572, titled SHOE TIGHTENING SYSTEM, filed July 30, 2003, and incorporated herein by reference. A fabric 110 typically covers upper 102 and underlies fas-

tening system 108. Fabric 110 preferably is a breathable fabric, such as, a mesh, or open cell foam fabric, but could be other types of breathable fabrics or moisture management fabrics as are generally known in the art, such as, for example, polyesters, nylons, blends, or the like. Upper 102 also has a heel 112. Heel 112 may be a wear resistant fabric, such as, leather or canvas, but frequently is a molded plastic or other material as is known in the art.

[0002] Outsole 104 comprises a heel portion 120, a forefoot portion 122, and a toe portion 124. Outsole 104 also has an upper surface 126 approximate upper 102 and a lower surface 128 opposite upper surface 126. As shown in FIG. 2, shoe 100 may have one or more studs 200 coupled to outsole 104. Also, shoe 100 have have a pedal connect part 202, as is generally known in the art.

[0003] Conventionally, outsole 104 is an integral unit formed from carbon fiber material. Instead of carbon fiber, some outsoles 104 are formed of high density, rigid plastics, such as, for example, ABS or PVC. Conventional carbon fiber outsoles have slots, holes, or other connection points to facilitate coupling studs 200 or cleats to outsole 104.

[0004] While conventional outsoles 104 are function, they suffer many drawbacks. Thus, it would be desirable to develop an improved outsole for athletic shoes.

[FIELD OF THE INVENTION]

[0005] The present invention relates to composite outsole and, more particularly, to an athletic shoe outsole comprising a carbon portion and a titanium portion.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0006] To attain the advantages and in accordance with the present invention, a shoe with a composite outsole is provided. The composite outsole comprises a carbon fiber portion and a titanium portion. The titanium portion is molded to the carbon fiber portion using adhesives and the like. The titanium portion provides increased strength and ductility to allow for additional features in the outsole, such as, for example, air flow vents that increase air circulation for breathability and moisture management as well as reduce drag.

[0007] The foregoing and other features, utilities and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following more particular description of a preferred embodiment of the invention as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0008] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the present invention, and together with the description, serve to explain the principles thereof. Like items in the drawings are referred to using the same numerical reference.

[0009] FIG. 1 is a side elevation view of a conventional cycling shoe; FIG. 2 is side elevation of the conventional cycling shoe shown in FIG. 1 with studs; FIG. 3 is a side elevation view of a composite outsole consistent with an embodiment of the present invention; FIG. 4 is a bottom plan view of the composite outsole of FIG. 3 consistent with an embodiment of the present invention; FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the composite outsole of FIG. 3 consistent with an embodiment of the present invention; FIG. 6 is a side-by-side exploded view of the carbon fiber portion and the titanium portion of the composite outsole of FIG. 3 consistent with an embodiment of the present invention; and FIG. 7 is an alternative carbon fiber portion of the composite outsole consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0010] The present invention will now be described with reference to FIGS. 1–7. While the present invention is described with particular reference to an outsole used with a cycling shoe, one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize on reading the disclosure, that the composite outsole could be used with other shoes, such as, for example, track shoes, baseball shoes, football, shoes, soccer shoes, golf shoes, or the like. These examples to other athletic shoes are exemplary and non-limiting.

[0011] Referring first to FIG. 3, outsole 300 is shown. Outsole 300 could be coupled to upper 102 in place of outsole 104, as shown in FIG. 1. Outsole 300 includes a carbon portion 302 and a titanium portion 304. Carbon portion 302 is typically molded carbon fiber, but could be other carbon composites. Outsole 300 may have one or more studs 306 attached, generally to the carbon portion 302 using conventional techniques, such as, for example, slots or holes in carbon portion 302. Studs 306 could be connected to carbon portion 302 in a manner similar to attaching titanium portion 304 to carbon portion 302 as explained in more detail below as well. Outsole 300 can be contoured similar to a conventional outsole such that, carbon portion 302 includes a carbon bottom 308 and an

up-turned outer rim 310. Titanium portion 304 also has an outer wall 312 extending below carbon bottom 308 to a Ti bottom 314.

[0012] Referring now to FIG. 4, a bottom plan view of outsole 300 is shown. As best seen in FIG. 4, Ti bottom 314 has a plurality of holes 402. Holes 402 provide an airflow path to allow air circulation, which increase breathability and reduce drag. While holes 402 can be placed anywhere on Ti bottom 314, it is preferable to place at least one hole 402 in a toe area 404 and at least one hole 402 in a heel area 406. As can be appreciated, wall 312 and Ti bottom 314 define a generally open area or volume 408. Area 408 is open to provide air flow, but may be substantially filled in if desired. In other words area 408 only needs to provide an air flow path A (best seen in FIG. 5) from intakes to exhausts.

[0013] Referring now to FIG. 5, a top plan view of outsole 300 is provided. As best seen in FIG. 5, outsole 300 has one or more air flow paths as shown by arrow A. While arrows A show a possible air flow path, air circulation in volume 408 would not be constrained to the particular path shown, but suggest to typical fluid mechanics. Further, volume 408 could be partially filled with channels left for

airflow.

[0014] As shown, carbon bottom 308 has an inner edge 510 defining an opening 512 into which titanium portion 304 fits. In particular, outer wall 312 has a top edge 514 proximate inner edge 510. Tabs 502 extend radially outward from top edge 514 over inner edge 510 and over a portion of carbon bottom 308. An adhesive layer 504 between tabs 502 and carbon bottom 308 couples titanium portion 304 to carbon portion 302. FIG. 6 is identical to FIG. 6, but shows carbon portion 302 and titanium portion 304 in side-by-side orientation for clarity.

[0015] FIG. 7 shows an alternative arrangement for carbon portion 302. Instead of carbon bottom 308 having an inner edge 510 defining an opening 512, carbon bottom 308 may be substantially solid with a plurality of slots 702. The plurality of slots 702 substantially align with tabs 502, such that tabs 502 coupled to titanium portion 304 extend through slots 702 and extend over a portion of carbon bottom 308. Adhesive 504 would still couple titanium portion 304 to carbon portion 302. In this embodiment, tabs 502 could extend radially outward as shown in FIGS. 5 and 6, or they could extend radially inward, or a combination thereof.

[0016] While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to a preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various other changes in the form and details may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.